

FALL 2007 infuse

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Are you growing in pride or humility? Jesus warned His disciples about growing in pride in Matthew 23:12, “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Jesus was born in a manger and came

to serve. Serving others allows one to see past his or her needs and focus on the needs of others. Serving is a humble act. The question is, are we following Christ’s example and growing daily in humility or pride?

When pride shows its ugly head, does one meet it head on with all honesty or does one rationalize his or her actions? Are we the first to apologize or the first to be defensive? “Pride leads to destruction; humility leads to honor” (Proverbs 18:12). While pride loves attention, humility doesn’t advertise accomplishments.

The pride of life spoken of in I John 2:15 is about one taking credit for the blessings of God. The pride of life attitude is not of God. It is God who has given you your mind, strength and talent. What can one boast about? All that one has and is belongs to God. God created us, the vessel that is home to His Holy Spirit for every Christian. How can the vessel be greater than the Author?

Psalms 8 is a beautiful Psalm about the greatness of God. In the Psalm God assures us of our worth in His creation. He has made us the custodians of His creation and just a little lower than the angels. God’s creation is an awesome work of love, which may at times make us feel very small. It is not God’s goal to make us feel small, but rather have a healthy respect for Him.

We have been created in the image of God and as such, let us all approach His throne with humble hearts of praise and glory for His greatness.

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THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST

“He could have asked for a legion of angels to annihilate His enemies, but He did not. Rather, He humbled Himself to the Holy Scriptures and allowed Himself to be taken.”

By George James

Jesus Christ demonstrated many great attributes. One of His many beautiful characteristics was humility. Jesus Christ humbled Himself before His Father and the great holy law. He also humbled Himself before His encounter in the wilderness with Satan by fasting for forty days and nights. He knew of the devil’s powerful schemes and temptations, so He knew He had to be ready. He became ready by refusing food and drink during this forty day fast. In this manner He humbled Himself, but in this humility He was strengthened and sharpened to refute any temptation.

His great examples of humility did not stop there. Jesus carried a humble heart to the cross. His blood ran down a battered and bruised body. All of this was for a sinful world that is not worthy of His amazing grace. The fascination is it didn’t have to be this way. He told Peter in the garden, as an army encircled Him, that He could ask for a legion of angels to annihilate His enemies, but He did not. Rather, He humbled Himself to the Holy Scriptures and allowed Himself to be taken.

Jesus Christ epitomized all great things and humility was one of them. In Matthew 5:48 He asks us to be perfect. We know Christ was perfect, and part of His perfection was humility. So I ask, my dear readers, how can we humbly reflect Christ in our lives? Matthew 11:28-30 is a good place to start. Let’s take a read from the KJV: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke

is easy, and my burden is light.” What message is our Savior conveying to us in this example? Our labors beat or burden us down, and we need rest from them. Why is this the case? In verse 29 Christ invites us to learn of Him and His ways. When we do this and when we apply His ways to our lives and take on His character we find rest for our souls. Why? Jesus Christ also tells us here that He is humble and lowly in heart. He did not let His ego get in the way of expressing the right behavior or thinking the right thoughts. Human beings, on the other hand, sometimes become hurt and flustered by the slightest things. We think we deserve this and that and people should treat us just the way we like. Some people think they are just entitled to certain things, and become so worn down emotionally when they don’t receive them. Jesus Christ was not occupied with such drivel. His focus was on a humble heart, and on pleasing His Father. In this fashion, Christ was selfless. He did not walk around with a sense of entitlement, so He wasn’t worried about His feelings getting hurt. And so because of this His burden was light in this area.

Therefore, to humbly reflect Christ one must be selfless. Be Christlike. Live your life to please the Father, and let the ego trips fall by the wayside. When we do this there is no longer hurt emotions over the meaningless chatter of this world. For our thoughts need to be on the spiritual and the heavenly and not on the worldly passions that drag us down and hinder our spiritual growth. **i**

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING HUMBLE

By Emmanuel Donkor

In one of his plays, William Shakespeare presents a character whose life represents the values inherent in having a humble spirit. It also presents the destruction, not only to the human being, but also to the society as a whole, when pride and arrogance rather than humility take the center stage in our lives.

In *Coriolanus*, a distinguished army general and a member of the aristocratic class excels as he leads his country into war with their enemy. However, he could not bring himself into submission to the people whose approval he needed in order to become a consul in the senate of the city. This is chiefly because, in spite of his heroic achievements, pride and arrogance were at the center of his life, especially his dislike for the working class people who ironically needed to approve of his candidacy. This lack of humility later proved to be his downfall as he is banished from the country that he had served honorably. Lack of humility destroyed the good soldier.

Humility is a virtue that is vital in the lives of people and nations. First Peter 5:5 says, "... all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility..." Christians are admonished to put on the spirit of humility at all times so that we would continue to bring leadership and direction to a dying generation. This virtue has brought people from obscurity into prominence. Many quarrels and conflicts among people have been averted because one party exercised the spirit of humility.

Indeed, many leaders, political

or otherwise, have made significant contributions to humanity because they first thought of other people rather than themselves. They often did not consider themselves superior to others. Great leaders such as Mother Teresa and Kofi Annan immediately come to mind. These people were concerned with making the world a safer place to live in rather than thinking about themselves. Our Lord Jesus Christ rightly indicated, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6 NIV).

There is yet another area of life that has suffered immensely over the years as a result of the lack of humility. Many marriages have ended in bitter court battles and in most cases in divorce primarily because there was no understanding of the concept of humility as prescribed in the Bible by our Lord Jesus Christ through his apostles. In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul, through the inspiration of God, lays claim to the importance of humility and submission in marriage. "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord ... husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it..." (Ephesians 5:22-25). Paul was referring to the husband humbling himself before his wife as a sign of affection and love. This is what is missing in many marriages, especially Christian marriages. The world would be a better place to live in when couples exercise humility for one another. We need to first understand what humility is. Since it is a word which is frequently used but often misunderstood, it is right that we understand what it means, especially

the way it was meant to be as prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT HUMILITY IS NOT

Interestingly enough, humility is also a word or concept which is often misunderstood. Some people have equated humility with humiliation. Being humble is not a sign of weakness, as many people would believe. This assertion suggests humility as having a low opinion of oneself to the extent in which one debases his potential and more importantly, God's perception of him as one 'created in His image and likeness.' Humility is also not the debasement of one's potential and abilities. God, in His infinite wisdom, created us with high hopes that man would reflect His glory and His rule on earth. The mandate for mankind is to exercise dominion and authority over His creation whilst at the same time acknowledging His sovereignty. We have done two things: firstly, we have over valued ourselves to the extent that we have become both the creator and created. This is not what God intended it to be. Secondly, we have failed to see ourselves in the same way as God first saw us at the time of creation. We have not lived up to God's expectation. This is what we need to address as we continue with His assignment on earth.

HUMILITY

The word Humility is derived from the Latin word *humilis*, which means low, humble from earth. Thus, a humble person is generally thought to be unpretentious and modest, some-

one who does not think that he or she is better or more important than others. It is also defined as a quality by which a person considering his own defects has a “lowly” opinion of himself and willingly submits himself to God and to others for God’s sake.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, a 13th century philosopher and theologian describes humility similarly as “the virtue of humility” that “consists in keeping oneself within one’s own bounds, not reaching out to things above one but submitting to one’s superior.” Humility arises from a sense of sincere gratitude for who we are and, more importantly, what God, Creator of the universe, has made us. When we consider the enormous provision of life and peace, particularly in an increasingly unstable world, we would be humbled for God’s guidance.

Naturally, humility is comprised of the following behaviors:

- Submission to God and legitimate authority.
- Recognition of the virtues and talents that others possess, particularly those which surpass one’s own and giving due honor and when required, obeisance.

There are not many people with a humble spirit in these last days. However, we have a classic example of a person with the spirit of humility in Jesus. Though divine, He was also down to earth who lived like mankind. Jesus, unlike man, did not show false humility. In other words, He did not under value His own authority just for the sake of praise and adulation from others. He provides the perfect example of a role model for humility in a dying generation.

JESUS CHRIST – THE ROLE MODEL IN HUMILITY

Without a doubt, our Lord Jesus Christ is a perfect example of a person who showed incredible humility even though He was by very nature, God. The apostle Paul aptly encourages us

to emulate His nature:

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God, something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness...” (Philippians 2:5-8 NIV).

Here are a few characteristics of humility that Jesus exhibited whilst He was on earth:

- He had to be led as a sheep to the slaughter, all for the sake of redeeming mankind. In other words, He denied Himself equality with God, took on the shame and the sins of mankind for whom there was no semblance in any form. This is a true mark of a person with a humble spirit.
- Even though he was the Messiah and even had His birth announced thousands of years before, He was born in lowly surroundings (Luke 2: 1-7).
- In the garden of Gethsemane, He had to “lay low” for the sake of fulfilling his divine assignment. He did not deserve to be “humiliated” by hanging on the tree. This is because He was God, totally different from mankind in char-

acter and attitude. And yet He willfully succumbed to the will of the Father. Now, this is what I call a man of humility.

True humility is recognizing the sovereign authority of God and those in authority and hence submitting to them while at the same time recognizing the potentials of people.

BE HUMBLE!

It is amazing to often find that the great leaders of our time have all been men and women who had a great deal of humility. When we step out of the Bible, humility has been one of the virtues that has been held in the highest esteem by society. This again shows how relevant and contemporary the Word of God is. It is alive yesterday, today, and forever. This great planet, earth, would become a far more peaceful and stable place to live in if men and women would learn the values of humility. It can lift people from places of obscurity into positions of prominence.

We have been challenged by these words of wisdom. It does not kill to take a bath in the water of humility. It would make you clean, strengthen and guide you as you move from nobody into becoming somebody. What is it going to be? It is your call. **i**

PROVERBS ON PRIDE

He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble. (3:34)

To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. (8:13)

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. (11:2)

Washing THE FEET

By Jeff Reed

Last year I entered a local film festival. I had created a short film with my brother and our small production team. It was our first narrative short film and I felt confident going in that we should receive at least one prize. I figured it would be hard for someone to make a film better than ours, but I thought there might be a remote possibility. The first film premiered. “Ours was better,” I thought and I felt even more confident. Then it happened. They played a film that was better than ours. It was actually much better. Next they played a film that was better than that one. Several more films played, and then our film followed.

We weren’t the filmmaking geniuses that we had imagined ourselves to be. In fact, we still had a lot to learn. It was a very humbling experience. There is an African proverb that says, “Whatever accomplishment you boast of in the world, there is someone better than you.” This is very true. There will always be someone smarter, more talented, better looking, with more money, and a better job than you. Accepting this inevitable fact gives us a type of human humility. But this is not the humility that God expects us to have.

Jesus Christ was the most powerful man ever to walk the face of the earth. There was no one better than Him. He was the Creator of the universe, owner of everything, a member of the Godhead who chose to become flesh and blood. Yet, He was also the most humble man who ever lived.

Paul, writing to the Philippians, expressed Christ’s humility by writing, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8). The ultimate expression of His humility was His selfless death for us. The goal of His life was to make it possible for us to inherit eternal life. He was not seeking His own glory but because of this “God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The humility of Christ was present because of His total commitment to serving others. He states this clearly in Matthew 20:28: “[The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” There

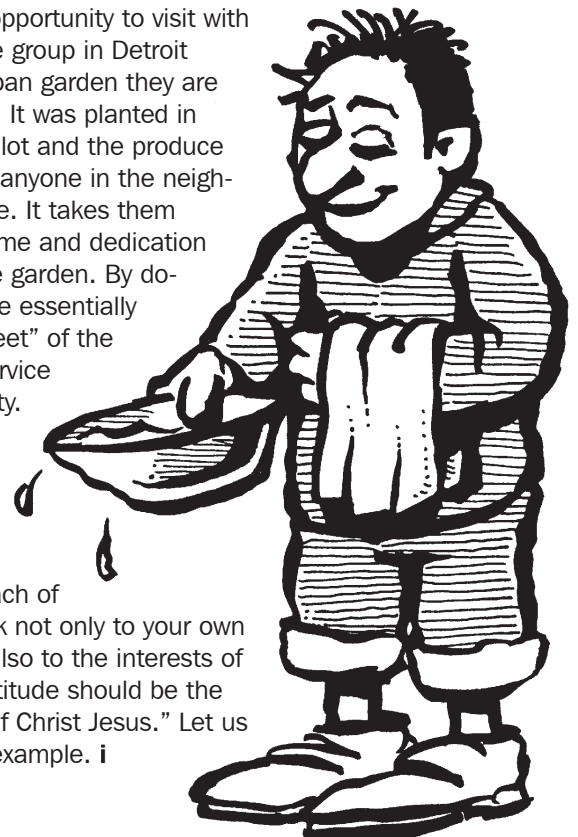
are several examples in the gospels where we can see this humility displayed.

The greatest example occurs the evening before He was to be betrayed. Jesus shared a Passover meal with His disciples. During the meal He filled up a basin with water and wrapped a towel around Himself. He began washing each of his disciples’ feet and dried them with the towel. This was a service that would normally be done by the least trained servants. Because of this, it was considered one of the lowliest duties a servant could perform. Here we have the God of the universe performing a nasty, stinking job that was reserved for the least competent servant. It wasn’t merely a ritualistic or symbolic foot washing. I imagine that when He was finished, the disciples had extremely clean feet—I would guess the cleanest their feet ever were. Afterward He said, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

We are to be like Christ in how we serve others. By serving, we will learn true humility.

I had the opportunity to visit with the local Infuse group in Detroit and visit an urban garden they are responsible for. It was planted in an abandoned lot and the produce is available for anyone in the neighborhood to take. It takes them considerable time and dedication to maintain the garden. By doing this they are essentially “washing the feet” of the community. Service leads to humility.

Before Paul gave the example of Christ in Philippians, he tells us, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Let us all follow that example. i



Who are you

trying to

impress?

infuse

By Jeremy Brown

Obviously you are not trying to impress God. If you were trying to impress God you would not covet the big house, big truck, and take the vacations you cannot afford, but you spent your money on these expensive things to impress your friends and family. If you were trying to impress God you would understand that, most of the time, when you are trying to impress man you are pulling yourself further and further away from God, by breaking His Ten Commandments.

In my opinion God is like your parents; you could never impress your parents and you will never be able to impress God. The reason for that is God expects you to follow His laws and commandments; we humans have to understand God wants to reward us for every good deed or for every commandment we keep. When I say God is like our parents, you could never or will never be able to impress your parents because they raised you a certain way and they know what you are capable of, because they taught you. You can never impress them, but you can surely make them proud when you do what is right. For example: many of you remember your days in grade school; you would get good grades and your parents would tell you they were proud of you. You would always wonder why your parents did not seem impressed or as happy as you were about your grades. The reason for your parents being unimpressed is the simple fact you did what they expected you to do. They were proud but not impressed you did what was expected.

“Many of us would frown upon the idea of worshipping the Devil; it is nevertheless true that if we live to gratify the “desires of the body and mind,” we are yielding to the “power of the prince

of the air [Satan], the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2-3).

When you are a teenager you have many distractions! In between the obvious of trying to find yourself, you are also dealing with the problems most teens deal with, “impressing their peers.” You can look at the rate of accidents among a loaded car of teens and a teen riding alone. The car loaded with teenagers is at a greater risk of an accident, because of a teen wanting to impress his/her friends; so that teen decides to speed to impress his/her friends and they wreck the car, which ends in the death of their friends. All because he/she wants to make a so-called GOOD IMPRESSION. Many of the other stupid things teens try includes drugs, racing, sex, and many other life-threatening dares. Teens tend to fall away if that guidance is not there for them. For example: I was slowly allowing myself to slip away from the church by attending football games on the Sabbath, and I did not just attend football games because I received so much pleasure when I was at a football game; I wanted to impress my friends and not be the one missing out on all of the outings. As I mentioned, these problems are prominent in teens but there are some adults who spend their lives acting like teenagers always trying to impress others.

“Keeping up with the Joneses” is a popular American phrase for keeping up with or staying one step ahead of our neighbor every time he/she gets a new type of technology. You must always out do each other (your neighbor) when it comes to all these new technological gadgets. This phrase explains why, according to statistics, 44 percent of Americans are in severe debt and the average American has a debt of \$12,000. All for the American dream, which brings people from all over the world to America. The thing many people

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grow by volunteering

By Mike James

We read in Matthew 25:31-46 that helping others is essential to living a Christian life. Jesus said those who do not care for the downtrodden could face expulsion from His kingdom. The types of people He expects us to care for include the poor, destitute, sick, strangers, and prisoners. Many people shy away from these types of people in our society today. One of the things Jesus is telling us in Matthew 25 is that all humans have the potential to become part of the family of God. God will not exclude anyone who repents and follows Him. Therefore we need to be cognizant of this fact and treat all our brothers and sisters equally. But volunteering to help with these types of people can also teach us things that can build our character.

Hopefully we are all volunteering in our communities in some way. If not read Matthew 25; James 1:27; and Galatians 6:9-10 for some

motivation. But what is our motivation when we volunteer? Are we volunteering because we have been directed to do so by our school, family, or church? Regardless of our motivation, participating can help create motivation for you. There have been times when I did not feel like participating in volunteer activity, but I carried through on my commitment. I remember one day in particular when I had promised to play sports with physically and mentally challenged kids and teens. I remember getting there and feeling like it was the last place I wanted to be on that particular day. I was just not motivated and not feeling enthused. But as I started to interact with the challenged athletes I noticed their positive attitudes. They were laughing and smiling and truly enjoying themselves. I looked at some of them in wheelchairs, suffering from Down's syndrome, autism, retardation, and a host of other issues. My attitude began to alter as I worked with them. They didn't seem to care they had all these "issues." It helped me realize how insignificant my problems were. I believe this is one of the reasons God wants us to work with the seemingly less fortunate. It helps us learn about our attitudes and mind-set, and it also motivates us to change those attitudes.

Those of you who do volunteer, is it always the same type of service that you perform? For example, if you always serve at a soup kitchen why not write a letter to a prisoner? For some, there may be a fear of dealing with someone in prison or jail. We may have a perception that people in prison are bad or dangerous. This is true in some



cases, but there are many people in prison or jail because of mistakes and bad choices. Some are there because of mistakes by the justice system. Remember that Jesus mentioned prisoners as one of the categories of people we need to deal with. What might we learn by communicating with them? One thing we could learn is how easily one mistake can impact the rest of your life. I had the experience of visiting and writing to someone in prison that was interested in our church. The reason he was in prison was because of assaulting two individuals with a baseball bat. The incident occurred after the two individuals in a bar assaulted him. The easy lesson to learn from this is mixing alcohol with anger and the costs that are incurred. Talking to this man helped me learn other things about prison life from someone on the inside. Once again, as with the physically and mentally challenged, I became aware of how easy I had it. It also helped me not take for granted all the little things in life a prisoner misses out on.

In Matthew 8:3; Mark 1:42; and Luke 5:13 we read of Jesus healing a man with leprosy. Those with leprosy were outcasts in the society in which Jesus lived. We see in this example Jesus did not abide by societal norms when it came to helping others. In today's society some would look at AIDS/HIV victims as outcasts. When the disease was first breaking onto the scene there were many in society who wanted to

keep these individuals away from others because of their fear of the disease. Would you be able to visit with a person with AIDS if necessary? Or are you afraid? I had to answer this question a few years ago when the daughter of someone in the Church came down with AIDS. The disease was contracted through the use of drugs. I had to overcome a little fear going into this situation because of the impact the media had on me years before. Once again the experience helped alter my perception as I listened to someone suffering more than I ever had. I was also profoundly altered during visits to a sick friend who was dying of colon cancer. As I watched him wither away I realized how important each day is in our life. How we need to be doing the things God wants us committed to now.

I have learned much from putting myself in uncomfortable situations in trying to help others. I am far from being a complete individual, but each of these experiences has helped me get closer to God and realize more fully who He wants me to be. Those of you who do volunteer, try to expand your volunteer efforts and helping experiences beyond what you feel comfortable with. Those of you who don't volunteer, start now and you will find that these experiences will teach you things you can't learn in any other way. **i**

VOLUNTEER

Host an exchange student

Idealist.org

Foster Parent

Rescue animals

Visit a Jail

YMCA

Read aloud to a group of children

Rapid Emergency Deployment

Social Services

Drug and Alcohol rehab

Volunteer Vacations

Volunteermatch.org

Designated Drivers Association

Boys and Girls Club

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Homeless Shelters

Visit a convalescent home

Record yourself reading a story for the blind

Teaching Your CHILDREN HUMILITY

By Evelyn Anderson

I often reflect on the time when I was raising my daughters and, to this day, I am always amazed by how much they imitated my actions and less often listened to what they were told. Parenting in the early stages was a wonderful, yet challenging time; I wouldn't trade any of it... (Hmm? Just pondering).

Motherhood taught me hard lessons about humility. We were a single-parent household; I worked from 9

A.M. to whenever, so it required my girls to learn responsibility early, as they would often have to mind themselves until I came home. Our finances were so limited babysitters were a luxury.

As my daughters grew older, parenting grew more complicated and challenging. It quickly became apparent to me they needed to have knowledge of God and develop a lifelong relationship with Him. I also realized it would require me to change my lifestyle and live a life committed to God's Word. Again, children tend to do what parents do and not so much what parents say. For instance, it's very hard to tell a

er possible. How could I submit to His instructions for living life? Everything I enjoyed fell in the "do not" category! I looked into the faces of my little girls; I didn't want them to follow in my footsteps thinking love means putting out. I didn't want them to have the same disappointments I experienced. I had to show them a better way. I had to humble myself and ask God for His forgiveness. It was the only way.

Humility is a hard thing; it's like that feeling one gets when your shoulders begin to sink in surrender and you want to rear back to defend yourself for all it's worth and snatch control again. For me resistance would have only led to future disaster for my family. So I began to show my children the meaning of humility. Every night on bended knees we would ask the Lord to forgive us of our sins. We asked Him to take over as Head of our family. We would ask for His direction and His guidance. We asked Him to reveal His plan for our lives. We asked for strength to do His will. We took a special trip to the Christian bookstore to buy a family Bible and some others books to help the children gain a better understanding of who Jesus Christ is and how He humbled Himself to the will of His Father.

Change happened; I began to come straight home from work. No more rendezvous before going home. I shook some people off. I began preparing more home-cooked meals. My children were doing much better in school, as they weren't sitting up waiting for mommy to get home when they should have been sleeping. They began imitating the things that I did, praying on their own and reading a scripture before bed.

We soon had a church home. We

**"I am always
amazed by how much
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they were told."**

child not to smoke, engage in sexual activity or even drink when the parent is engaging in sexual activity outside of marriage and abusing alcohol. I had to submit to God; I wanted to be a better role model for my children. They looked up to me; I was their world. So for their sakes, I looked up to God.

I knew I would have to sincerely humble myself before the Lord and give Him control over my life. I also knew living a life of humility, for me, would be the most difficult challenge of my life. I was young, vibrant, and loved the nightlife. I was full of passion and lust and I enjoyed indulging myself whenever



understanding humility

attended Sunday school. I joined the adult choir and worked on committees. My children sang in the choir and joined functions of their own. We still faced challenges; no one is exempt from that, but we relied on and received divine help.

Maybe you are a single parent or maybe you are married with children trying to build your home. The foundation you build your home on is crucial. It is more precious than any rare jewel. When building a physical house, we often give up control to those who are experts in the field of construction. To give up control of one's life takes greater strength. God is the expert in righteous living.

There is an expression that says apples don't fall far from the tree. "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverb 22:6 KJV). To teach a child humility is to simply live a life of humility. We must be an example. When we become parents it is no longer about us. We are held accountable for the lives entrusted to us by God. Sacrifice is love. Making oneself available to God for His plan and purpose is the ultimate success in life. As so eloquently put in this poem by Marcus Troy Alexander in his book of inspirational poems, *Live: There Is More to Life The ABC To Living*:

"Humility is the key to exaltation
Like the winds blowing the leaves
The essence of a person
No one really sees
If you acknowledge God
In all that you do
There is no battle
That He won't see you through..."

(And he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. St. Matthew 23:12b KJV).

My girls are all grown up now; one is a social worker, wife, and mother; the other, a teacher. Both are dealing with the complexities of adulthood and both are filled with the Holy Spirit. An act of humility brought about good success in my home and now resonates in the lives of my children; and as they continue the example of humility, it will resonate even in my children's children. To God be the glory! **i**

By Loren Chamberlain

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1-4).

What Jesus was teaching His disciples is that true humility means to deny oneself, to accept a position of servant-hood, and to completely follow Him. Jesus wanted them to change their attitude toward greatness. Their minds were still preoccupied with the establishment of an earthly kingdom and they were seeking positions of advantage. Jesus used a child to help them overcome their self-centered attitude and to have servant attitudes, not being "childish" (arguing over petty issues) but "childlike," with humble and sincere hearts.

HUMILITY DEFINED

It is eye opening to find that we get the word "humus" from the word "humility". According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary humility means the quality or state of being humble in spirit, freedom from pride or arrogance. Humus, on the other hand, speaks of earth or ground and is formed by the partial decomposition of vegetable or animal matter, the organic portion of soil. It is easy to see the connection between these two words. Any time I feel pride coming on I just remind myself that Adam and Eve were created from earth matter and I am just one of their offspring. I can soon feel pride and arrogance melt away like butter on a hot griddle, remembering that my human ancestors were made from the earth and I also am earthy, made also, we might say, from humus.

Even though we have now been reminded of our beginning makeup, we must also understand that humility is a deep awareness of unworthiness, not worthlessness! "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:3-4). We are totally overcome by the awesomeness of the universe and we wonder how God could be concerned for people who so often are disappointing to Him.~ Yet, on the other hand, God created us only a little lower than Himself or the angels!~ So when we question ourselves about our worth as persons, we find that God considers us highly valuable.~ After all, we have great worth because we were created in the image and likeness of God bearing the stamp of the Creator. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.~ Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:26-27).

By comparing ourselves to God's greatness we learn to respect God's majesty. When we look at creation we can't help but feel our smallness by comparison. There is nothing wrong with feeling small, in fact it is a healthy way to get back to reality, but God does not want us to dwell on

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our finiteness.~ Humility means proper respect for God, not self-deprecation.

FACETS OF HUMILITY

There was a man by the name of Naaman, and he was known as a great hero. He was used to getting great respect, and when Elisha treated him like an ordinary man he was outraged. He wanted to be healed but the method Elisha told him would bring healing was far too simple for this proud man. Go and wash in the small dirty river of Jordan! No way! "Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'?" (2 Kings 5:13).

There are times when people react in the same way towards God's offer of forgiveness. Just to believe in Jesus Christ, repent, and be baptized is somehow too simple. It is not difficult enough; it just doesn't seem heroic enough to just have eternal life in the Kingdom of God handed out freely. What Naaman had to do for his leprosy to be washed away is similar to what we must do to have our sin washed away—humbly accept God's mercy. From the story of Naaman we learn how humility is good training in obedience, the clarifying of our dependence on God, and how humility challenges our pride. We must not let our reaction to the way of faith keep us from the cure we need the most.

If we are to serve others, humility is absolutely essential. Jesus warned people that it was not wise to rush to get the best seats at the Feast. One of the major problems of the world today is the eagerness of people to raise their social status by attempting to get ahead of others.~ They aim for prestige.~ However, Jesus made it clear that to gain a higher level of prestige we must look for a place where we can serve others. If God wants us to serve in a greater capacity, He will invite us to take a higher place.

Those who are truly humble people will compare themselves only with Christ, realize their sinfulness, and understand their limitations. They also will recognize their gifts and strengths and are willing to use them as Christ directs. Humility is not self-degradation; it is a realistic assessment and commitment to serve.

Life is a great lesson in humility; unfortunately, we may be quite old before we realize the truth in that statement! **i**

THE BOOM

By Sarah Hoeck

Every human being, at some point in his or her life, feels a sense of pride. Whether it's because you aced the test, made the football team, got the job, or are having a baby boy or girl, you feel pride somewhere along the road of life. But just because everyone feels proud at certain moments in the time they're alive doesn't make it right, or acceptable. In fact, it's not. It's the opposite. It's wrong. The Bible warns us of this character flaw many times.

A good example is found in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 6:16-19: "These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren." Look at that first one. It says, "a proud look." God hates it. It's an abomination to Him, meaning it is vile, shameful, and detestable before the Lord. And that is certainly not good.

Pride is a funny thing, in a not-funny, no-laughs kind of way. It's a consuming fire and yet, at the same time, it provides a good feeling. To feel as if you've done something or are someone special, or to feel that you're important, feels great but it's a feeling that can destroy you. For example, there was a man named Haman, who was the second most powerful man in all the Persian Empire. Only the king was more powerful than he was. He tried not only to kill Mordecai, but all of the Jewish people in Persia. But before we get to all of that, let's start at the beginning. It all started with Haman's pride.

You see, Haman was appointed higher than all the other princes, and this boosted his ego up quite a lot. He thought he was the best. Everyone had to bow down to him. And when Mordecai wouldn't, it stung. It hurt his pride. It was a strike right to his ego, and since he thought he was better than everyone, he certainly did not appreciate what Mordecai was doing.

Because Haman hated Mordecai so much for deflating his ego, he would destroy all the Jewish people of Persia. He convinced the king to pass a law bringing death to all of them.

MERANG EFFECT

THE BOOMERANG

This, of course, reinflated his ego. Sometime later, Queen Esther invited Haman to a banquet. Only he and the king were to attend. This made Haman feel as if he were definitely something special. After all not everyone got invited to a banquet by the queen. So, he attended. And his pride went up a notch. And when he was once again invited the very next day, his pride went up another notch.

But then, as he walked out of the gates, he saw Mordecai, who didn't move to bow to him or anything. And this, once again, angered him. So, that night, when Haman arrived home, he called together his friends and his wife and told them about all his many blessings. He told them about his job, his children, and how he had been advanced above others serving the king. But even though Haman had all these blessings, he would never be satisfied as long as his selfish pride and hatred of Mordecai consumed his soul. Destruction was on its way. Of course, his evil wife and his friends knew just how to solve the problem. A gallows should be built and, in the morning, Haman should ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai. Haman, of course, loved the idea. He could kill the man who would not pay him proper respect. He could see him hang instead of waiting for later.

But on that very same night, the king was reminded, while being read the book of Chronicles, that Mordecai had once saved his life and never been rewarded. Upon hearing this, he decided to do something very special for Mordecai. So, early the next morning, Haman came and the king asked him, "What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" When Haman heard this, he thought to himself, in his prideful heart and mind, "Who else would the king want to honor except for me?" (He didn't realize that all of his pride was about to turn his life into a terrible nightmare.) After he set who he thought was himself up in the king's attire and crown, Haman got the wind let out of his puffy self. The king delighted to honor the man he hated more than any other man, Mordecai. Instead of hanging him, he would have to humble himself and parade him around the city.

Even Haman's wife and friends knew that what happened to him was more than just "bad luck." When a person lifts himself up in pride, the only place to go is downward. Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Our God's warning was taking place as Esther, the king, and Haman met together for their second banquet. It was during this banquet that Esther told the king all about Haman, what he was really doing, and what he was really like. I guess you could call this part "the boomerang effect." Haman threw a boomerang at Mordecai and the Jews, and missed. Then, as boomerangs do, it came back and took Haman's head right off. Or rather, it hanged him, on his own gallows. But, anyway you look at it Haman's pride got the better of him and led him to his death.

Proverbs 16:5: "The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." And this doesn't just mean a physical punishment. It also refers to a spiritual punishment, as in no eternal life because everyone who is proud is despicable to the Lord. And even if they join forces together, as Haman, his wife, and his friends did when they met that day, they will still meet their punishment. Because sin's end is still death, no matter whom you stand with, no matter what you do, and no matter what you think. Anyone with this prideful personality will be punished. None will escape the wrath of the Almighty Lord.

God warns us many times that the prideful way of life is the road to destruction. And that road is wide and easy to travel. But, it leads to pain, and ultimately, death. It's funny how a haughty person gets so puffed up on something he did, and he doesn't even realize the pain and suffering he put himself and others through. So, a word to the wise, take the highway of the humble on the way to eternal life. It's going to be tough. So, overcome your pride. Get off your high horse. Be humble. Don't think you are better than someone else. Remember that no one is perfect, not one, except for the Lord, your God. Remember all of this because none will go unpunished. But then again, it's your head. **i**

Paul & Pride

Origins and Origen

By David W. T. Brattston

At first sight, it would appear easy to write an article on the topic “God hates pride,” but it is not in fact as simple as it would first seem.

Granted, there are plenty of Scripture passages condemning pride. Infuse readers with a good knowledge of the Bible will immediately recall Proverbs 16:5: “The LORD detests all the proud of heart”; and Proverbs 16:18: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall”; and Romans 12:16: “Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” In 1 Corinthians 13:4 the Apostle Paul tells us that love “is not proud.” Wisdom, says Proverbs 8:13, hates “pride and arrogance.” All these quotations are from the New International Version. Other translations use other words for pride: haughty, arrogant, glory, conceit, self-glory, etc., or rephrase the verse and use the word “boast.” There is no shortage of other disapprovals of pride, by whatever name, in the Bible; for example: Job 40:11f; Psalm 10:4; Proverbs 3:34; 8:13; 11:2; 15:25; 21:4; 29:23; Ecclesiastes 7:8; Jeremiah 13:15; Ezekiel 16:49; Mark 7:22; Romans 11:20; and 2 Timothy 3:2. In fact, 2 Timothy 3:5 even instructs Christians to avoid and have nothing to do with proud people. Both James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 tell us that “God opposes the proud.”

But writing an article on the sin of pride involves much more than hunting up and listing Biblical sources against it. The problem comes in looking up some verses and discovering the Apostle Paul sometimes approved of pride and even was proud himself. The NIV quotes him as saying to the Cor-

inthians, “I take great pride in you” (2 Corinthians 7:4), and that he was giving them “an opportunity to take pride in us” (2 Corinthians 5:12); and to the Galatians (6:4): “Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself.” The more literal Revised Standard Version translates the relevant words of Romans 15:17 as “I have reason to be proud of my work for God”; 1 Corinthians 15:31 as “I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus”; 2 Corinthians 1:14 as “you can be proud of us as we can be of you”; and Philippians 2:16 as “so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.”

How do we reconcile the clear teaching of many Scripture writers against the total opposite attitude taken by the most influential Christian next to Christ Himself?

The answer was provided long ago by the church father Origen, the most dedicated and prolific Bible student, teacher, and commentator before the Reformation. A lifelong bachelor who earned his living from an early age as a Scripture interpreter, preacher, and seminary professor, he wrote more about the Bible and Christian faith than anyone else for the next thirteen centuries. In addition, the church of his day still possessed oral memories of Jesus and the apostles, which handed down their interpretations and explanations of the written Scriptures. Moreover, he and other Christians of the first centuries wrestled with and provided solutions to problems in the interpretation of the Bible. Instead of reinventing the wheel by puzzling out the same problems again to produce our own

solutions, we today can search the early non-biblical writings to find and adopt the solutions of Christians who were much closer in time and culture to Jesus and His apostles.

Origen resolved the seeming contradiction in the Bible when he preached against pride in a sermon in the A.D. 240s. He naturally condemned people who are proud that they have relatives in government or are otherwise important in a worldly sense, or have power over other people, or hold a high position, or are wealthy, or possess a beautiful home or lands. However, he also chastised people who are proud for what seems a good reason to Christians: wisdom, chastity, and having borne chains for Christ. Origen said Christians should not be proud even of these. As an illustration, he mentioned that Paul had similar reasons to be proud: visions and revelations (2 Corinthians 12:1; Acts 16:9f; Acts 18:9), signs, wonders and miracles (Romans 15:17-19; 2 Corinthians 12:12), and ambition to preach the Gospel in communities where Christ was not previously known (Romans 15:20). According to 2 Corinthians 12:9, he was even proud about his weaknesses! We may also add that Paul had reason to be proud because he planted many churches in Turkey and Greece, and because of his sufferings on behalf of the Gospel. Yet, said Origen, God strongly disapproved of such pride in Paul and took measures to counteract or balance it.

Origen reminded his congregation that, in addition to visions, revelations, etc., God also gave Paul a thorn in the flesh, a demon from Satan to torment the apostle and thus dampen down or

in the next issue:

ANGER & LOVE

Winter 2007/2008

How You Can Contribute to the Winter 2007/2008 Issue of *infuse*

We're looking for articles, short stories, artwork, poetry, essays, personal experiences and reviews from you.

GUIDELINES: Articles should be approximately 750-1,000 words. Only electronic versions are accepted. Submissions should be centered on the next issue's theme of **Anger & Love**.

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eliminate any tendency toward pride. Paul three times asked the Lord to remove it but He refused, telling Paul that it was to remind him that he was and should be totally dependent on God's grace (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). That which comes by grace is no cause for pride, because God is the source and the means to any accomplishment. Paul was no exception, said Origen, to God's rule against pride.

In violation of many passages of Scripture, Paul may have drifted into pride, and even have encouraged others to be proud, but this does not mean God approved of it. All Christians have weaknesses, and Paul's was pride. We must follow the consensus of all the Bible writers rather than the lapse of one man. The Lord hates pride. Paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 11:1, we should follow Paul's example only to the extent that he followed Christ's. The Bible is clear that we should curb our own pride before God, in His disciplining love, sends thorns in our own flesh to counteract it. **i**

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forget when they try to keep up with the Joneses is that their pursuit of monetary goals could slowly pull them away from their Creator.

To get that monetary value you may have to perform some immoral acts, work on the Sabbath, and many other things. "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2 NKJV). "Since through vanity, men want to believe what is popular at the moment, they will kid themselves and their associates into believing even religious and scientific theories that have no basis whatsoever in actual fact!" (Living Church of God, The Ten Commandments, p. 66). "Did you know that recent surveys have revealed that the financial troubles plaguing most families are not the result of low income? Rather, overextending a normally adequate income for luxuries and personal indulgence, and by the American habit of installment buying directly causes them! 'Buy now and pay later,' say the advertisements. But do you really need to buy this item now? And are you sure you will be able to 'pay later'?" (Living Church of God, The Ten Commandments, p. 68).

"Through God's Spirit in us, we must fight the fight of faith—put down the lustful human nature within us—and ultimately succeed in 'bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ' (2 Corinthians 10:5)" (Living Church of God, The Ten Commandments, p. 70). The advertisements

on television are so good, that they can have you saying you need something when it is truly a want. From our days in elementary school till the day we die, we are taught to compete with each other for social honors and material advancement. Today it is all about everybody being in a hurry to have a good time. Is that what life is about, having a good time or getting everything we can out of life? "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?" (James 4:1-2 NKJV). Our generation needs to beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15 NKJV).

Eating that big steak, driving a fancy car, or vacationing in the Bahamas does not make you happy. We have to understand that happiness is a state of mind. There are many rich people in this world with all the things we covet, but some of those people are not happy when they do not go about life and the so-called "pursuit of happiness" in a godly way. "[C]ovetousness...is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). When you covet these material things you give your energy, time, and money, and you become slaves to these material things. Then it becomes a burden to pay your tithes to your Creator. Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." **i**

REPORT: ARKANSAS INFUSE RETREAT

By Jeremy Brown

In my opinion Arkansas is one of the most beautiful states next to Florida. The reason I say that is because I am an outdoors person and Arkansas is such a nature ridden state: beautiful scenery, nice down home country feeling, and many other things I missed due to our short time spent there. It is truly a beautiful state!

At the Second Annual Infuse Retreat we covered the most important topic you could possibly converse about in my opinion. We discussed the many ways you could communicate with our Lord and Savior. The ways you can communicate with your Lord is through prayer, fasting, meditation, and good works. We are not saying these are the only way to communicate with God, but these are some common ways you communicate with God, and I am pretty sure many people already know some of these communication tactics or have already used them. We also talked about ways in which you can perform these ways of communicating better.

On the first day of the Infuse Retreat, Rayburn Williams conducted a Bible Study on the first four commandments, which relate to how we communicate with God through worshiping God on the Sabbath and how we should not put other gods before Him. Also on the first day of the retreat Tony Buchert conducted a Bible Study on how we relate to God through prayer. Mr. Buchert focused on four points we should put more emphasis on while praying: that we have faith in HIM, that we appreciate what HE has given us, that HE is number one in our lives, and that we seek HIS will.

On the second day, there were three Bible Studies. Mike James gave the first one on why we should study our Bible and better ways to do your Bible Studies. Mr. James had two key points during this Bible Study. His first point was on why we should study our Bibles. We do it because it provides knowledge for salvation, it is God's Word, it helps us stay away from false teaching, and it increases faith. The second point was

on how to study the Bible? You study your Bible through reading, taking notes, and using Bible helps such as Bible commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and other reference books. You can also write down questions and later ask your minister, and finally you can chain reference.

Anika Sandy-Hanson held the second Bible study of the day on how we communicate with God through fasting. Usually we only fast on the Day Atonement, but you can fast whenever you want to make your relationship with God stronger and to show God how sincere you are. An example was given out of the Bible of a village God was going to destroy because of their abominations, but when the villagers repented and fasted, God spared their lives, but the villagers were later destroyed because of returning to their evil ways.

Denny Ledford held the third Bible study, which was the final Bible study of the day, on how we communicate with God and our community through good works. An example was given on how some of our major corporations give back to the community. Wal-Mart is an example of giving a great deal of money to surrounding communities. Since it was the Sabbath, we had services with the Fayetteville, Arkansas congregation. There was a cook-out at the church after services. To end the day we had a get-together at Minister Wayne Turnbull's home. We went swimming and enjoyed conversation with our fellow brethren.

On the final day of the Infuse Retreat two Bible Studies were held. Mike James presented a Bible Study on communicating with God through meditation. The key points focused on were questions about meditation, scriptures on meditation, and meditation exercises.

The final day Jeff Reed held a Bible Study on relating to God and the Holy Spirit. Everything we studied over the Infuse Retreat weekend was beneficial to me. I learned many new techniques for communicating with our Lord and Savior. You can go to God and talk to God anytime, just the way you talk to your friends. When you are down and sad or trodden from a hard day's work, you are never alone because God is always with you. God is a father and friend who is always there and will always be there to listen to your happy and sad days.

The thing I am trying to say is we need to stop using God. Do not go to God when it is convenient for you, and don't save fasting, meditation, prayer, and good works only for those times when you need something. You should do some kind of communication with God daily to build a good strong relationship and communicate with God all the time even on your happy days. Just talk to God and you will see a difference in your life. I know it is something we must all work on especially when you come in tired from a hard day's work or you have just eaten and you sit down on your comfy couch and fall asleep. Give God a little of your time everyday even if it is just to thank Him for allowing you to see another day. **i**